Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No.: WITN2099001
Exhibits: none
Dated: 24th January, 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5th November, 2018.

I, GRO-B, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1968 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am single and employed as a GRO-B.

2. I can confirm that I have appointed Thompsons solicitors to be my legal representative. I confirm that the Inquiry should send all correspondence regarding me to Thompsons.

3. In this statement, I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C, Genotype 5. In particular, how I was infected, how the hepatitis C virus has affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it has had on me.

Section 2. How infected

4. I have hepatitis C following receipt of a blood transfusion back in 1987, whilst a patient at the Southern General hospital in Glasgow.

5. On 5th July, 1987, I was the victim of a near fatal stabbing attack on GRO-B. I was rushed into the Southern General hospital in Glasgow and rushed into theatre for life saving surgery. I was in surgery for nearly 5 hours and required a blood transfusion. I received 22 units of blood. Two days after the surgery, my condition deteriorated and I required a further blood transfusion, I was given 36 units of blood. In total I received 58 units of blood. I was in hospital for two weeks and was discharged on 20th July 1987. When I was in the Southern General Hospital I was under the emergency care of Mr Ferguson, consultant surgeon. I was also under the care of Dr MacDonald.

6. In 1987, following discharge, I went to GRO-B GRO-B. At this time I had lost three stone in weight and was physically weak with significant pain due to my extensive surgical wounds. The local GP that I was registered with in GRO-B was called Dr GRO-B. He refused to treat me. I do not know why he did not want to treat me. I think he wanted me to get back to Glasgow. He did prescribe me diazepam, valium and oral opiates. I was in a lot of pain and required stronger analgesia and I injected opiates myself using clean needles obtained from a clean needle exchange run by the Church of England. I do not admire the fact that I did this but I was in severe pain at the time and was desperate to sort this out. I do not have a history of drug use or addiction. This is the only time that I have ever injected IV drugs. I did go to GRO-B Infirmary which is between GRO-B to receive more pain relief. The doctor there prescribed me with painkillers. I went to the hospital once a week for more painkillers for about a month.

7. At the time of my blood transfusions in the Southern General Hospital, my first transfusion was an emergency and I was only aware that I had had a blood transfusion after the operation when I recovered consciousness. When I received a further blood transfusion two days later I was not informed about the risk of being exposed to infection from blood products.

8. I had a bad spell after the assault and suffered from panic attacks. I was extremely stressed and angry after the assault and the realisation that I nearly died. My anger was out of control following the assault and I was losing my temper far too easily. I split up with my girlfriend in 1988 and moved into a Church of England hostel. In 1989 or 1990 I moved into my own bedsit. GRO-B GRO-B GRO-B. I now knew that I had an anger management problem to sort out. I had no history of bad temper. I started reading books on psychology. I recognised my problem and decided to move back up to Glasgow in October 1990. Upon my return to Glasgow it took me awhile to get back on my feet. I do not have any contact with my family. I began to work for GRO-B GRO-B. I worked with GRO-B from 1991 to October 1999. One of the co-founders of this charity was a lady called GRO-B who was my day-to-day boss. I started off in the warehouse packing and unpacking lorries. I cleaned the vehicles also. The charity did not have a forklift for all of this lifting was done manual. It was a hard and demanding job. The charity then assisted me to sit my driving test with the aid of a government grant and with my HGV licence I was able to work as a driver. I did on occasions drive to GRO-B to give aid. It was during my employment with the charity that my colleagues noticed a gradual deterioration in my health. In the autumn of 1988 a colleague told me that my skin was a yellow colour. At this time I had not noticed this. I had also suffered gradual weight loss and felt tired and fatigued all the time. I thought this tiredness was all to do with

the manual job. I think I had got used to feeling unwell. My health had been declining gradually. I started sleeping in for work so much that GRO-B told me to go and see my doctor. I had not been ill since the 1987 assault. I had been physically fit until this period in my life.

9. It was not until November 1998, before I consulted with my GP Dr GRO-B. I had symptoms of lethargic, weight loss and jaundice. She obtained some blood tests in November and December 1998 telling me that she was testing me for everything. I gave my consent to testing, thinking that 'everything' referred to things like diabetes and cholesterol levels. The consequences and implications of a positive result of HIV and hepatitis C were not discussed with me. I did not know that these two specific tests were taken from me. On 12th January 1999, Dr GRO-B told me that I had hepatitis C, I was really shocked. I had never heard of hepatitis C before. I had heard about HIV. I was HIV-negative. I was told by my GP that there was no cure for hepatitis C and she said that I would die early. I remember getting very upset and just running out of the doctors surgery, kicking a fire door open so I could escape. My GP had no discussion with me about the risk of others being infected as a result of the infection. I was given no information about the infection and how to manage it. My doctor had no discussion with me about the risk of sexual transmission. On leaving the doctors surgery, I went straight to my friends address GRO-B . GRO-B GRO-B. I went there because I knew he had the Internet and I want to find out more information about hepatitis C. I researched hepatitis C and that was the first time I realised that the infection could be transmitted through sexual intercourse. I was single at the time but I was still very concerned regarding passing on the infection to others.

Section 3. Other infections

10. I do not believe that I have received any infections or infection other than hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood.

Section 4. Consent

11. Dr GRO-B took my blood and said she was sending it away for testing. She told me that she would be testing for everything. I did not know that I would be getting tested for HIV or hepatitis C. I did not know that these two specific tests were taken from me. The blood was taken from me with my knowledge and with my consent.

Section 5. Impact

12. The mental and physical effects of being infected with hepatitis C were profound. Physically, I was extremely fatigued and felt exhausted all the time, I lost a large amount of weight and just generally felt unwell. Mentally, because I felt so ill all the time I began to get depressed.

13. There were no further medical complications or conditions that have resulted from my infection.

14. It was not until April 1999 I had an appointment to see Dr Beattie and Dr Campbell both liver consultants based at the Southern General hospital in Glasgow. I was accompanied on this visit to see the specialists GRO-B. She was concerned about my declining health. Dr Beattie arranged for me to have a liver biopsy which I had performed in June 1999. The biopsy confirmed that I had chronic liver disease and that my liver was inflamed. I was 31 years old at the time. Both Doctors Beattie and Campbell said that having hepatitis C would not affect my long-term life expectancy and that I would have a normal life expectancy. They did advise me to start

treatment as soon as possible. This treatment was to run over the course of 12 months the treatment was called interferon and I was to take it by self-injecting.

15. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in accessing this treatment.

16. I do not know if there were any other treatments available for hepatitis C at that time. This was the only treatment that was offered to me.

17. The physical effects of the treatment were almost immediate. Following the first injection, I had a serious side-effect in that I started to convulse uncontrollably. Luckily this did not happen again. I suffered serious side-effects between July 1999 and December 1999. I was rundown, tired and had constant flu type symptoms. I had no appetite and lost even more weight. By October 1999, the interferon treatment affected my ability to work. I felt very isolated and alone throughout the treatment and mentally I became very depressed. I did not have any family support throughout interferon treatment. We are not a close family and I have had no contact with them since I was 14 years old.

18. Since my diagnosis of hepatitis C it has not impacted on any medical or dental care. I tried to avoid going to the doctors or the dentist as I know they will know I have hepatitis C. In early November 2009 I had some routine ear, nose and throat treatment on my ears and this required an operation. The anaesthetist, prior to the operation, kept asking me about my history of heroin addiction. I am not a drug addict but as soon as medical staff learn about your past history of hepatitis C, they immediately assume you are a drug addict. I was angry at his comments at the time but I don't believe it impacted on my medical treatment.

19. The impact of being infected with hepatitis C was minimal in relation

to my private family and social life. I am a single man and I live alone. I have no contact with my family. The last time I saw a member of my family was a few years ago at my mother's funeral, none of my family members are aware that I had contracted hepatitis C. I am a very private man will and rarely socialise, only with a few close friends.

20. I am aware of the stigma surrounding my diagnosis of HIV or hepatitis C. Due to this stigma I have always kept my condition to myself. It is only recently that I have felt willing and able to talk about my infection but only because it has become more common knowledge that innocent people have been infected through contaminated blood.

21. Due to the serious side-effects with the treatment I received, namely interferon, I had to give up my job with GRO-B. I suffered financial hardship at this time. I had to receive income support and live a vastly reduced quality of life, both physically and financially. On completing interferon treatment in July 2000, it took me some time to find further work. I was out of work for over a year and suffered further financial hardship. From, 2000 to 2006, I found a job as a driver in a tiling company who supplied the building trade. Unfortunately this company went into liquidation. From 2006 to the present day, I have been working in my current position GRO-B. I work compressed hours so that I have more days off which is better for me because I need more time to recover, although my hepatitis C is dormant the effect on me can still be extreme fatigue. It has taken me many, many years to pay off the debts I accumulated throughout my illness, directly linked to hepatitis C. It is only now due to my recent payments from the Scottish government that I am now debt free.

Section 6. Treatment care support

22. At no time did I receive any counselling or psychological support. It was not offered to me by anyone and I do not even known if such counselling and support was available at that time.

23. I have not faced any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment as a consequence of being infected with hepatitis C.

Section 7. Financial assistance

24. On 10th August 2004 I received £20,000 from the Skipton fund. In December 2018, I received a payment of £30,000, I also was awarded £525 a month, this was from the Scottish Infected Blood Scheme.

25. I do not know how I first became aware that financial assistance was available from the Skipton fund. I think I heard something about it on the news. I assumed I researched it on the Internet, I was sent the application forms through to my home address and I filled them in.

26. I found this to be an easy process. My GP helped me with the Skipton application form. In relation to the £30,000 I was awarded, I read somewhere in a newsletter that further financial assistance was available for people who had received contaminated blood. I remember I looked the Skipton fund up on my computer, there was a telephone number on the website and I rang it, it went through to the Scottish Infected Blood Scheme, they were excellent and I remember that very day I received the lump sum.

27. My only observation in relation to the financial assistance available is that if I hadn't stumbled across the newsletter or heard something on the TV, I would not have known I was entitled to financial assistance. I would imagine there are many people out there who have been infected, like me, that still don't know. In relation to the money I have received, whilst I am very grateful, it in no way compensates me for my loss of earnings and ill-health. I have only just recently managed to pay my debts off that I accumulated throughout my period of ill health.

Section 8. Other issues.

28. In 2001, following the completion of interferon and the sudden improvement in my health, I decided to obtain some answers in relation to why I had received infected blood back in 1987. I arranged a meeting with Dr Myrtle Peterkin, consultant haematologist with the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Scotland, based at Gartnavel hospital in Glasgow. I saw her in 2001 and she obtained a blood sample from me. As a result she sent me a letter, which is now misplaced, confirming me that I had a recorded amount of flying squad emergency blood supplies given to me prior to being cross matched at the southern general hospital in Glasgow. She said that I had an African strain of hepatitis C. She confirmed that it was more than likely that I became infected with hepatitis C following the multiple blood transfusions that I received in 1987 at the Southern General hospital in Glasgow.

29. In 2001 and 2002 I also consulted a solicitor in Rutherglen, Glasgow whose name I cannot recall, he told me that I did not have a viable case to take to court

30. On 23rd November 2009, I had a meeting with Dr Frame, consultant haematologist at the Scottish National blood transfusion centre based at Gartnavel hospital in Glasgow about my history with blood transfusion. He had direct access to my SNBTS file which confirms that I received no less than 58 units of blood following the serious assault upon me, he would not let me read the file, nor would he give me any photocopies but he suggests to me that I access these records by invoking the freedom of information act I have since been sent letters confirming the batch numbers of the blood transfusions that I received at that time. I can produce these documents in

evidence if required.

31. I do wish to remain anonymous in this inquiry.

32. In December 1999, despite the horrific side-effects of the interferon, I knew that the treatment was working. I suddenly felt better. I started putting on weight and feeling better myself. I had more energy, my colour improved and I felt excellent. It was as though I had been blind and had just put my glasses on and could see. I soon realised how long I had been ill for. I had got used to feeling ill and had forgotten what being healthy was all about. In July 2000, Dr Beattie advised me that the hepatitis C was now dormant. I know that the hepatitis C virus has not been fully eradicated and so I do not have complete peace of mind. I was discharged from Dr Beattie's clinic in July 2000. I then attended my own doctors on a yearly basis for annual blood tests. I am told my liver function tests are normal. I now only attend my GP if I begin to feel unwell. I still suffer with chronic tiredness. I have to live with this. My continuing tiredness is something that I do worry about. I worry that the hepatitis C virus may return to being active.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed GRO-B

Dated 7/2/2019